**Mrs. Dunn’s Lovely, Lovely Farm**

By Myron Levoy

(Adapted by Patricia Hesse)

**PLAYERS:**

**Narrator: Amelia**

**Mrs. Dunn: Piper**

**Mr. Dunn: Nicholas**

**Mr. DeMarco: Kylan**

**Mrs. Kandel: Sadey**

**Amelia Hen: Olivia (dancer)**

**Agatha Hen: Jojo (dancer)**

**Dumpling Baby Chick: Maggie (dancer)**

**Tomato: Jake**

**Eggplant: Sophie**

**Green Onion: Sarah**

**Benjamin (child): Lane**

**Judith (child): Kayla**

**Rachel (child): Alyssa**

**Mr. Warfield: Braydan**

**Mrs. Callahan: Eden**

**Mrs. Grotowski: Dylan**

**Narrator**: Mrs. Dunn had always wanted a farm. Back in the old country, she had lived in Poland with its crowded streets and its men forever looking for work, and its thin children, forever hungry.

**Mr. Dunn**: Mrs. Dunn –we finally have enough for our passage to America. It is time.

**Mrs. Dunn**: It is so hard to leave Ireland; I know it is best. But promise me that when we get there, we will save every penny for a farm. I want a lovely farm with chickens and cows and potatoes. A farm where our children have good fresh food and a place to run. A lovely, lovely farm.

**Narrator**: When the Dunns arrived in New York, they moved into a little apartment on the third floor where there were many other immigrants from many other countries were living.

(*Dunns are greeted by neighbors in succession… they shake Mr. Dunn’s hand and tip their hat or curtsy to Mrs. Dunn)*

**Mr. DeMarco**: Welcome, to America. I am new here too. Most important thing to know is stay away from Mr. Warfield

**Mrs. Kandel**: I, too am your neighbor. My family has the apartment just below yours.

**Mr. Dunn** (*to Mrs. Dunn*): the landlords were terrible in Dublin too –we will be fine.

**Narrator**: Now that the Dunn’s had a place to live, a job was next.

**Mr. Dunn** (*black soot on face –comes in swinging wife around*): I found work Mrs. Dunn! (*she wipes the soot off herself*)

**Mrs. Dunn**: Whatever is all over you Mr. Dunn?

**Mr. Dunn**: I’m hauling coal, sending it down metal chutes to the basements of all these buildings. Now we can pay the rent and buy our food. It may be hard work and I know it’s not much money, but here… we can save our first pennies for your farm.

**Narrator**: Every week Mr. and Mrs. Dunn counted the pennies in the box. It seemed they would never have enough for a farm.

**Mrs. Dunn**: Mr. Dunn, I have decided we must buy our farm now.

**Mr. Dunn**: There is no money –the children are always needing shoes and this and that.

**Mrs. Dunn**: We must start with something or it will never happen. (*Mr. Dunn shakes his head in agreement*) Well, I’m glad you agree Mr. Dunn because I’ve got something to show you. (*She brings in Amelia the chicken, who struts around*)

**Benjamin**: Oh, mother! Our very own hen.

**Judith**: Oh, Mama… Can I name her? Pleeeez?

**Rachel**: Let’s name her Amelia1

**Mrs. Dunn**: Oh! I think Amelia is a fine name! (*Mrs. Dunn goes about her business while children fuss over chicken. Then Mrs. Dunn exits.*)

**Judith**: I hope you like it here Amelia.

**Amelia**: And I hope you like my eggs.

**Benjamin**: We’ll make you a nice nest. Rachel, bring some of those old clothes. (*Rachel gets clothes and returns, putting a blue shirt on top of nest)*

**Amelia**: No, no, no. Blue is not my color.

**Judith**: Oh. Sorry… how about the pink shirt?

**Amelia**: Oh! Pink is perfect!

**Narrator**: Soon Amelia was joined by…Agatha (*Agatha enters and bows. She walks around Amelia)*

**Agatha**: And just who is this?

**Rachel**: This is Agatha!

**Agatha**: Oh, I hope we become great friends Amelia!

**Amelia**: Me too! (*The children make a nest for Agatha too*)

**Judith**: We made a nest for you too!

**Agatha**: Thank you… because I am about to lay an egg. (*Two chickens take turns bawking and laying eggs –big colored Easter eggs)*

**Narrator** (*during egg laying*): Now there were eggs (*enter baby chicken cheeping*)! Sometimes two, sometimes three, sometimes more!

**Mrs. Dunn** (*re-enters*): Just look at my beautiful chickens… now it’s time for the vegetables!

**Narrator**: Mr. Dunn built deep boxes on the fire escape outside the bedroom windows. He filled them with earth, and planted vegetable seeds. The sun kept them warm and the rain gave them a drink. Until finally… (*vegetable pop up*)

**Mrs. Dunn** (*admiring the vegetables*): Children, look at our farm! Tomatoes, eggplant, and green onions! All growing, all will give us good fresh food.

**Judith**: Oooh! Onions are my favorite!

**Onion**: Did you hear that? I’m special!

**Tomato**: Yeah… if you like bad breath!

**Eggplant**: You know, you do stink.

**Onion**: At least I don’t look like an over-grown grape! (*stick tongues*)

**Narrator**: The family carefully weeded and watered their fire escape garden and fed the chickens.

**Tomato**: Ooh, that feels so good. Yes, right there.

(*after weeding*)

**Tomato**: Watch it, watch it! –you’re getting a little close there.

**Onion** (*applying plant food*): Getting a little too much plant food aren’t you there deary?

**Eggplant**: Calories, calories, calories! I’m supposed to be fat!

**Narrator**: Then one day… Mr. Warfield, the horrible, the terrible landlord came to collect the rents.

(*Mr. Warfield enters grumpily from back. He sees the vegetables on the fire escape. Looks at them angrily and goes up the stairs, stomping* )

**Mr. Warfield**: This is an outrage! What is that jungle doing on my fire escape! (*He begins stomping up steps, but is met by Mrs. Callahan and Noreen*)

**Mrs. Callahan**: Ah, Mr. Warfield… and when, pray tell, are you going to fix m’stove? The divil of a thing’s got only one burner working. Do you expect me to pay m’rent when I can’t cook soup and stew at the same time?

**Mr. Warfield**: Oh, blast! I’ll see you later. I’ve got a madhouse here. A madhouse! Let me go by, Mrs. Callahan.

**Mrs. Callahan**: And what might be the trouble, if I may ask?

**Mr. Warfield**: Somebody’s growing a jungle on the fire escape!

**Mrs. Callahan**: Ah, to be sure, to be sure. (*Mrs. Callahan nudges her little girl, Noreen, standing next to her to go tell Mrs. Dunn. We see Noreen enter Mrs. Dunn’s home and tell her. Mrs. Dunn is nervous. The family is trying to hide the chickens, …giving one chicken a lamp shade, coat rack, a pull toy, etc*) Now, Mr. Warwick, how can a jungle get the necessary nourishment on a fire escape?!

**Mr. Warwick**: I intend to find out, Mrs. Callahan, it you’ll let me get by!

**Mrs. Callahan**: But m’stove, Mr. Warfield. I’m paying rent for three rooms and four burners.

**Mr. Warwick**: yes, yes, yes. Very reasonable request. We’ll have it fixed in 72 hours. Now please let me get –

**Mrs. Callahan**: 72 hours is it? Make it 24.

**Mr. Warwick**: But that’s only one day. That’s unreasonable. Make it 48 hours.

**Mrs. Callahan**: 38!

**Mr. Warwick**: All right! We’ll have it fixed within 38 hours! Now let me through!

(*Before he goes another step, Mrs. Grotowski blocks his path*)

**Mrs. Grotowski**: Hello, Mr. Warfield. I dreamt about you last night! And what did I dream?

**Mr. Warfield**: I don’t care! Let me go by!

**Mrs. Grotowski**: I’ll tell you what. I dreamt that I took the money for your rent and tore it up into little shreds. Then I put a little pepper on it, a little salt, stirred in some nice chicken fat, and made you eat every dollar of it until you choked. And why?

**Mr. Warfield**: Please, Mrs. Grotowski, This isn’t the time for your dreams!

**Mrs. Grotowski**: I’ll tell you why. Because you promised to have my apartment painted two months ago. Two months! Where are the painters? Did they join the Foreign Legion? Or is it possible that they’ve gone over Niagara Falls in a barrel?

**Mr. Warfield**: We’ll have the painters soon.

**Mrs. Grotowski**: When?

**Mr. Warfield**: Soon. Very soon.

**Mrs. Grotowski**: How soon?

**Mr. Warfield**: Very, very soon. Let me go by, Mrs. Grotowski, before I lose my temper.

**Mrs. Grotowski**: This week! I want them this week.

**Mr. Warfield**: Next week.

**Mrs. Grotowski**: By Friday!

**Mr. Warfield**: by next Wednesday, Mrs. Grotowski.

**Mrs. Grotowski**: By next Monday, Mr. Warfield.

**Mr. Warfield**: Tuesday.

**Mrs. Grotowski**: All right. But it better be Tuesday!

**Mr. Warfield**: Tuesday. Absolutely, positively Tuesday.

*(Mr. Warfield finally reaches the Dunn’s and pounds on the door. He hears chicken bawks –they are scared!)*

**Mr. Warfield**: Why do they all hate me? She has her children making chicken noises at me –there aren’t chickens around here for miles! I’m a good man. Fair. Reasonable. (*he looks down and sees a few feathers*) Hmmmm. What’s this? Her children must be so wild they have pillow fights. (*he keeps knocking*) Ah well, I guess children must play. No harm. No like jungles on the fire escape!

*(At last Mrs. Dunn cracks the door and hands Mr. Warfield an envelope –the rent money. He takes the envelope, but pushes on the door, intending to enter.)*

**Mr. Warfield**: Mrs. Dunn, I’d like a word or two with you.

**Mrs. Dunn**: I’m feeling a bit ill today, Mr. Warfield, sir. Would you be so kindly as to stop back next week?

**Mr. Warfield**: Mrs. Dunn! There is a jungle growing on your fire escape!

**Mrs. Dunn**: Oh, Mr. Warfield… and is it the bottle (*she gestures*) you’ve been having with all that money?

**Mr. Warfield**: I am not drunk, Mrs. Dunn! I have two eyes!

**Mrs. Dunn**: So you have, Mr. Warfield. You’re blessed. There’s many a blind man would trade this very building for your keen eyesight. But still, a jungle cannot truly grow on a fire escape. Good day to you now.

**Mr. Warfield**: Good day my foot! I demand to see the condition of that fire escape. As landlord, I have the right to enter and inspect the premises. I’m a reasonable man and I would never come at an unreasonable hour.

**Mrs. Dunn**: Why it’s nearly four 0’ the clock. I’ve got to do m’ husband’s supper. ‘Tis not a reasonable hour at all.

**Mr. Warfield**: Either you let me enter, madam, or I’ll call the police. And the fire department. A jungle on the fire escape is a fire hazard. Let me in!

**Mrs. Dunn**: Tomorrow.

**Mr. Warfield**: NOW! (*the shout causes the chicken to squawk loudly*) Did you hear that, Mrs. Dunn?

**Mrs. Dunn**: Sounded like a cuckoo clock. Cuckoo. Cuckoo. Tis four o’the clock you see.

**Mr. Warfield**: Nonsense. You have a chicken in there! My building has chickens! (*He hangs his hat on the chicken rack*). According to your rent agreement *(he reaches to turn on chicken lamp –chicken screams.* *Chickens running everywhere)* This isn’t an apartment house, it’s a lunatic asylum!

**Mrs. Dunn** (*shaking rolling pin*): I’ve paid the rent. Tis my apartment!

(*He rushes to the fire escape*)

**Mr. Warfield**: My fire escape! What are these weeds supposed to be?

**Onion**: Weeds!!???

**Eggplant**: Who’s he callin’ a weed!

**Mrs. Dunn**: That? Why that one is onions, Mr. Warfield.

**Mr. Warfield**: This is an onion?

**Mrs. Dunn**: Oh, you can’t see it. The most of the white part of the onion is beneath the dirt. Least I hope tis.

**Mr. Warfield**: And this?

**Mrs. Dunn**: That’s an eggplant. But I fear for her. The soil’s not deep enough.

**Mr. Warfield**: Incredible! Don’t you like geraniums, Mrs. Dunn? I thought ladies like to grow geraniums. Look out the window, across the street. See the windowsills? There and there. And other there. Everyone else is growing geraniums.

**Mrs. Dunn**: That’s a good idea, Mr. Warfield. Twould brighten up the house. I’ll fetch some see tomorrow.

**Mr. Warfield**: No, no. I didn’t mean …Mrs. Dunn, look here. This is a firetrap! And those chickens! Are you completely insane?

**Dumpling**: He hurt my feelings? (*cries*)

**Agatha**: Now, you hush up –I don’t want to hear another peep out of you.

**Dumpling**: But mama, he doesn’t want us to stay.

**Amelia**: Let’s go get him girls!

**Agatha**: We can’t do that!

**Amelia**: What are you –chicken? (*they peck at him –chaos…the chase is on.* )

**Mr. Warfield**: Are you completely insane?

**Mrs. Dunn**: I think I’m as sane as you, if not a bit saner. You know what they say in America –“a chicken in every pot!” (*Chickens freak out*)

**Chickens**: Pot! Pot!

**Mr. Warfield**: Chickens in an apartment are a health hazard. Sale them to a farmer or a butcher!

**Mrs. Dunn**: I shan’t. They stay right here. (*Children calm chickens*)

**Mr. Warfield**: That’s unreasonable. I’m a reasonable man, Mrs. Dunn. Say something reasonable, ask something reasonable, and I’ll say: that’s reasonable.

**Mrs. Dunn**: Very well, Why don’t you pretend that you hadn’t come at all today. Then you wouldn’t have seen anything, would you, and your mind would rest easy.

**Mr. Warfield**: Completely unreasonable! And that’s why you tenants don’t like me. Because I’m reasonable, and you’re all unreasonable. Simple as that.

**Mrs. Dunn**: Oh, I like you Mr. Warfield.

**Mr. Warfield**: Nonsense.

**Mrs. Dunn**: Any landlord who would offer me the use of his roof for a fine little garden must be a very likeable and reasonable man.

**Mr. Warfield**: I didn’t offer you any roof, Mrs. Dunn.

**Mrs. Dunn**: You were going to. I saw it on the tip of your lips.

**Mr. Warfield**: My lips?

**Mrs. Dunn**: And you were going to say how much better twould be if the chickens had a nice big coop up there on the roof.

**Mr. Warfield**: I was never going to say –

**Mrs. Dunn**: Tut, tut, Mr. Warfield. You’ve as good as said it. And I was going to answer that for such generosity you should surely receive some fresh string beans and onions and potatoes in season. And you were going to say, Ah, and how lovely the roof would look with greenery all about. And I was going to answer, Yes, Mr. Warfield, and the tenants would surely look at you most affectionately. Would they not, now?

**Mr. Warfield**: Hmmmm (*thinking*)

**Mrs. Dunn**: Reasonable or unreasonable?

**Mr. Warfield**: Hmmm… well… I’d have to give this some thought.

**Mrs. Dunn**: But you’re a man of action, Mr. Warfield. You pound on the door like a very tiger.

**Mr. Warfield**: Yes. Well… it’s not unreasonable… if you didn’t already have any chickens or potatoes or onions, I would say no. But since you do have all this jungle of creatures and vines… I would, after careful consideration, being after all a human being, I would… ahem…..ahem….ahem….say….ahem. Say yes.

**Benjamin**: Did you hear that Amelia? You can stay!

**Rachel**: Hooray for Mr. Warfield!

**Judith**: Mama, you got your farm!

**Mrs. Dunn**: Oh, you are a darling man, Mr. Warfield. A darling, darling man.

**Mr. Warfield**: Here, Mrs. Dunn! Watch your language! I mean to say… “darling” man?

**Mrs. Dunn**: Oh, back in the old country, it only means you’re nice, that’s all.

**Mr. Warfield**: Oh. Now remember, Mrs. Dunn, a bargain’s a bargain. I expect one tenth of everything you grow as my roof rent. Is that a deal?

**Mrs. Dunn**: Tis a deal.

**Mr. Warfield**: Except the onions. You can keep them all. I hate onions My whole family hates onions.

**Onion**: (*to Mr. Warfield*) Oh, go lay an egg!

**Eggplant**: I think that’s the chicken’s job dear.

(*Mr. Warfield puts on his hat. Amelia struts over and rubs up to Mr. Warfield –he tries to get away from the chicken. The other chickens join, chasing him with outstretched wings. He is shocked.)*

**Mrs. Dunn**: She likes you! She knows you have a good heart! Chickens can tell right off!

*(Mr. Warfield races down the steps. The neighbors enter to celebrate with the Children, Mrs. Dunn!)*

**Narrator**: And so Mrs. Dunn moved everything to the roof, and Mr. Dunn added still more boxes for vegetables. The neighbors, along with Mr. Warfield enjoyed everything from cabbage to parsley to broccoli to lettuce --you name it, it was growing! Of course, the onions, the eggplant, and the tomatoes always ruled the other vegetables, saying they were the first grown and were therefore, more important. The children fed the chickens every afternoon and helped water the plants. And Mrs. Dunn had her lovely, lovely farm –or at least she thought she did, which comes to the same thing in the end.